

**AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION:**

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 3, line 16, as follows:

Providing screw-feeder means with a pitch growing towards the outlet zone, it is possible to pick up from the regions of the hopper means near the outlet zone a quantity of product that is greater than the quantity picked up from the regions of the hopper means that are ~~farer~~further from said outlet zone. In this way, accumulation of the products in the hopper means near the outlet zone, and the 'bridge' effect are avoided. Furthermore, is ensured a non-traumatic treatment of the fruit and vegetable products, which are not subjected to excessive pressure or to cutting actions.

Please amend the paragraph beginning at page 5, line 1, as follows:

In a preferred embodiment, shown in Figure 2, can be identified in the screw-feeder 6 different zones having different pitches from one another. In particular, starting from the fixed panel 5 ~~farer~~further from the outlet zone 9, can be identified a first portion 10 of the screw-feeder 6 having a first value  $p_1$  of pitch about of 200 mm. Subsequently can be identified a second portion 11 in which the pitch has a second value  $p_2$ , comprised between 200 and 250 mm, and a third portion 12 in which the pitch has a third value  $p_3$  of about 300 mm. Finally, near the outlet zone 9, can be identified a fourth portion 13 of the screw-feeder 6 in which the pitch has a fourth value  $p_4$ , of 400 mm. Experimental tests have shown that these values enable the fruit and vegetable products to be conveyed in an optimal manner towards the outlet zone 9, using a screw-feeder 6 having an external diameter of about 400 mm.